

Commission on Native Children bill – Quotes from National Supporters

“For far too long, our country has overlooked the needs of Indian children. NCAI firmly believes that the Commission on Native Children is an important step in bringing the issues of our most precious resources -- Native children -- to the forefront. Indian Country’s success depends on our ability to support our youngest citizens and we applaud Senators Heitkamp and Murkowski for making Native youth a priority. This Commission will further the national conversation and take action on issues that will help Indian Country build a better future for Native children across the nation.”

-- National Congress of American Indians

“The nation’s 37 Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), which collectively are the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC), are community-based institutions of higher education. They not only provide child care centers for their students that are parents and in some instances run the Head Start program on their reservations, TCUs also train the Head Start teachers and staff and are graduating nurses and K-12 school teachers to serve in their local communities. The TCUs are integral elements in advancing wellness and a continuum of education for American Indians and Alaska Natives. AIHEC is pleased to support the introduction of this legislation and thanks Senator Heitkamp for initiating a Commission to explore new and better ways to ensure a healthy and dynamic future for Native children.”

--American Indian Higher Education Consortium

“NIEA endorses Senator Heitkamp’s introduction of her first bill, which would begin to reverse the disparaging issues affecting children from our American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian communities. We appreciate the bill because it provides language to create a Commission focused on analyzing juvenile justice, health, educational wrap-around programs and falls in line with NIEA’s priorities for Native children. NIEA understands that our children must have the best support structures from birth through college, so that they may become the future leaders our communities need and deserve. We are happy to have a champion like Senator Heitkamp in Congress working for our Native children to provide those support structures.”

-- National Indian Education Association

“The Tribal Leaders of the Great Plains Tribal Chairman’s Association (GPTCA) would like to express our deepest appreciation for Senator Heitkamp’s legislation. Thank you for listening to us to improve the situations for our children. We highly support the legislation. For too many years the Children of our Tribes have been impacted by many challenges that stymie progress. Although, there are many success stories, we believe a comprehensive study is greatly needed and the proposed creation of the Commission in the Alyce Spotted Bear legislation will concentrate on seeking recommendations for improvement. Tribal leaders of the GPTCA look forward to working with you to implement the Alyce Spotted Bear Commission on Native Children legislation and to seek improvements for our Children.”

-- Tex “Red Tipped Arrow” Hall, Chairman, Great Plains Tribal Chairman’s Association

“Senator Heitkamp is a longtime champion for Indian Country and I am proud of her for taking a leadership role in making American Indian children a top priority. When I chaired the Indian Affairs Committee in the Senate, I knew that Indian children were the most at-risk population in America. I created the Center for Native American Youth to shine a light on the difficulties they face to find solutions to the challenges of teen suicide, inadequate health care, and education opportunities, and more. Senator Heitkamp’s legislation is a very positive and welcome step towards ensuring that Indian children will not be overlooked by policy-makers anymore.”

-- U.S. Senator Byron Dorgan (ret.), founder and chairman of Center for Native American Youth at the Aspen Institute